

No Secrets in the Secret Place (Living open before God, with nothing to hide)

Ezekiel (his name means “*God strengthens*”) was a prophet of God who lived at a time when God’s people were not only in exile, far from the land of the promise, but far from God. They were not in a good place spiritually; they committed all kinds of evil things and, to make matters worse, they thought that God couldn’t see them.

Opening text: Ezekiel 8:8-12 - *8 Then He said to me, “Son of man, dig into the wall”; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. 9 And He said to me, “Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there.” 10 So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. 11 And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12 Then He said to me, “Son of man, have you **seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark**, every man in the room of his idols? **For they say, ‘The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.’**”*

1. Ungodly secrets, in the secret place.

God tells the prophet to open a door that allows him to see into his world at that time. God’s basically saying, ‘come and see what I see’. Behind the scenes, the very leadership of Israel were defiling the secret place of the temple, by worshipping idols -the very precinct where Jehovah should be exclusively worshiped. Their acts were done in a dark, in secret— ‘*every man in the room of his idols*’ (v.12). They said, “*the Lord does not see us*”. That which should have been the ‘secret place’ became a place full of ungodly secrets.

- a) Such was the displeasure of God regarding their unfaithfulness that in **Verse 18**, we read that God was going to bring judgement that was inescapable:

Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”

- b) There seem to be some very extreme instances when God says that He won’t listen to someone’s prayer:

Jeremiah 14:11-12 - *Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for this people, for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.”*

In the New Testament, we read about something similar in **1 John 5:16-17**. We read about a type of sin that God says, *don’t even pray for someone who is into that kind of sin* (my paraphrase). We don’t know what kind of sin that is but in **verse 21**, we are told, “*little children keep yourselves from idols*’.

There are clearly two things that displease the heart of God in a very real way:

- The sin of idolatry (an idol is anything that takes the place of God in our lives – anything to which we direct the affection, honour, energy or focus that only God should have)
- The thought that I can do something so secret and well concealed that God won't ever know.

¹² Then He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, **‘The Lord does not see us,**

God is omniscient. That is what makes Him God. He is El-Roi (*the God Who sees me* – Gen 16:13). When we think that we can hide something from Him, that is an attack on his divinity. We are saying that He is not omniscient. That is an attack on His nature and character.

2. To think that we can outsmart God is the pinnacle of human pride

In the New Testament, we clearly see that with Ananias and Saphira. They thought that they could do something that God wouldn't find out. Peter told them, ‘*Why did you lie against the Holy Spirit?*’ (Acts 5:3-4).

a) He is an omniscient God! God feels very strongly about this.

Psalms 139:1-8 - *O Lord, You have searched me and known me. ² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. ³ You comprehend my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. [...] ⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.*

b) They rationalised and justified their sin further. They added: ‘*the Lord has forsaken the land*’.

They basically said, *the Lord doesn't care. He has left us*. It baffles me how anyone can ever doubt the love, compassion, mercy and presence of God. The very reason God was sending a prophet to speak to them, was evidence that He was still present, He was still loving, He was still looking for His people to change their ways, He still had a future for Judah.

They had turned the secret place into a place of their own secrets, thinking God couldn't see them.

3. We need to live open before God with nothing to hide

We need to abandon the pinnacle of human pride and live in humility before a God before Whom nothing is hidden.

Hebrews 4:13 - *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

It takes courage to make the decision to live naked before God. Adam and Eve covered their nakedness, and it didn't work for them. It won't work for us either. If we continue to prefer to rely on our efforts to hide that which is evident to the Lord, it won't work for us. You know what works? To come naked and to receive His grace.

Don't conceal what God longs to heal!

a) This passage says that everything about us is bare before God

There is nothing hidden and nothing secret with God.

Matthew 10:26 – *Therefore, do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known.*

Luke 8:17 - *For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.*

Luke 12:2 - *For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.*

Mark 4:22 - *For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.*

John 2:25 - *and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.*

The woman by the well could not hide from Jesus her 5 failed marriages (plus the new man who wasn't her husband). She later said to the people in her hometown: *"He told me all that I ever did"*

John 4:39 – *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."*

b) What Hebrews 4:13 also says is that we are accountable to God: *"to whom we must give account"*

1 Corinthians 4:5 - *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both **bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.** Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Romans 2:16 - *in the day when God will judge the **secrets of men** by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

"According to my Gospel" – this is not some Old Testament doctrine. No. This is part of the Gospel, the fact that every man is accountable to God. The 'secrets of men' (which, are only secrets to others, not to God) will come to light, be exposed and judged by God.

We need to abandon the pinnacle of human pride and live open and in humility before God. We should live with no secrets in the secret place.

1 Timothy 5:24-25 - *Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.²⁵ Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise **cannot be hidden**.*

Sin and good works: both *cannot be hidden*. I am so glad that God can also see good works, good hearts, right motives. Jesus once saw a man called Nathanael, and here's what he said:

John 1:47 - *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"*

One translation says, "*an honest man with no hidden motive*" (TPT)

Concluding thoughts

In our opening text today, we saw how God was so displeased with people who had turned to idols, who didn't believe God's love and presence anymore. They did things in secret, in the cover of darkness because they thought that God couldn't see them.

John 3:20 - *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

It takes courage to live naked before God, to change direction and come clean about things. But that is the way God's grace will be activated one's life:

Proverbs 28:13 - *He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

There is One who stood naked on a cross. He stood naked before God and men – clothed only with our sins and our faults. He stood naked to pay for them, openly, before God and men. His name is Jesus.

Because of Him, we can live naked and unashamed before God, like Adam before the fall. Because of Him, we know that we can stand forgiven and faultless.

Let us make this, our prayer before Him:

Psalms 139:23-24 - *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties ²⁴And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*